2:Man G-5 (1869-1880)1932 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

2. *Arca* shells, on account of their serrated lips, serve the double purpose—when a pot is being manufactured—of removing pieces of stone from the outer surface, and of imparting a more finished appearance to the vessel. *Pinna* shells are kept as receptacles for *tâ-la-ōg-*, and as plates for food, while *Nautilus* shells do duty as drinking vessels. No evidence can be found in support of Mr. St. John's statement,[1] that human skulls are used as boxes to contain small objects, for neither these nor the skulls of animals appear to have been ever so employed;[2] the former are kept and carried, as I have elsewhere explained, merely as mementoes of the departed, and the latter are stuck on poles, or hung round the eaves of their huts, as trophies of the chase. *Pinna* and other shells are said to have been used in former times as adze blades, but this is no longer the case, for quantities of iron are always obtainable. Strange as it may seem to some of my readers, there is no trace or tradition of stone having been utilised for this purpose.

3. The only instances in which these tribes appear to have had recourse to the natural defences of animals in the manufacture of their weapons are—(*a*) in the use of the serrated bone at the root of the tail of the sting-ray[3] for their fish-arrows; and (*b*) of the valves of *Perna ephippium*,[4] which were formerly —after being ground and shaped—fastened to their wooden-headed arrows, for use in hunting, and in hostile expeditions. Since, however, they have found themselves able to procure ample supplies of iron, these shell arrow-heads, like the shell adze-blades, have been discarded in favour of iron wire, nails, hoop-iron, &c.

4. The bamboo, although not employed by the Andamanese in such a variety of ways as it is by many savages, is yet in constant use in one or other of the following modes, viz:— of the ordinary medium size (male species) they form the *shafts* of their turtle-harpoons;[5] of the female species[6] they make *water-holders*, and receptacles for cooked food[7] when travelling (*gōb-*[8]); *knives* (*pô-chô-*[9]), which are narrow pieces hardened

[1] Transactions of the Ethnol. Soc., vol. v, p. 43.

[2] Very possibly the belief originated in the manner I suggested in a previous paper (*vide* Journ. Anthrop. Inst., vol. xi, p. 273).

[3] *Vide ante* "Hunting, &c.," paragraph 11.

[4] *Vide post* "Stone Implements," paragraph 5 (footnote).

[5] The shafts of their pig spear, being short are made of heavier material, viz., the thick rattan.

[6] Pieces of *Bambusa gigantea*, which have floated across from Burmah, or have reached their shores from wrecks, are much prized as buckets, none but the small ordinary bamboo being indigenous.

[7] *Vide ante* "Food," paragraph 31.

[8] *Vide* Appendix B, item 82.

[9] *Ibid.*, 69.

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412 over a fire, and sharpened by means of a *Cyrena* shell; *netting-*
314 *needles* (*pō·tòkla-*[1]) and *tongs* (*kai-*[2]), which last consist merely of a strip of bamboo, bent double, with pointed ends;[3] the slender *Bambusa nana*, called *rī·di-*, is generally selected for forming the hooked pole (*ngâ·tanga-*[4]), and it is likewise invariably employed for the shafts of their wooden and iron-pointed arrows.

534 5. Although there are materials ready to hand wherewith they might easily construct a few such simple musical instruments as are made and used by the Nicobarese, no attempt seems to have been made by them in this direction, for the rude sounding board (*pū·kuta-yem·nga-*[5]) can hardly be included under this head. This circumstance seems to find its explanation in the fact that though they are good timists their talent for music is (as will be presently shown,[6] on the testimony of more than one competent authority) of the lowest type.

412 6. A brush, suitable for painting the stripes on their baskets (*jōb-*[7]), baby-slings (*chīp-*[8]), &c., is obtained from a drupe of the small fruit of the *Pandanus Andamanensium* (*mâng-*), the pulp having been first extracted by means of a *Cyrena* shell.

[281] 7. Skins of animals, thorns, or spines of trees are not made
314 use of by these people in any way, nor do they have recourse to caves, rock-shelters, or tree-tops for their dwellings, though they occasionally, as I have before mentioned, avail themselves of the buttress-like formations of the roots of such trees as the *Ficus laccifera*, *Bombax malabaricum*, *Sterculia villosa*, &c., when travelling in bad weather, or when suddenly overtaken by a storm. Palm-leaves, as I explained when describing their habitations,[9] are employed for thatching purposes.

281 **Leather-work.**—From the last paragraph it will be correctly inferred that there is no evidence of their having ever possessed a knowledge of the art of dressing and preparing skins for use in any form: this may be due as much to the limited number and variety of those animals[10] whose hides might be turned to account in this way as to the equable temperature of the climate, which renders such, or indeed any covering unnecessary.

[1] *Vide* Appendix B, item 67.
[2] *Vide* Appendix B, item 80.
[3] A narrow and pointed piece of bamboo, bitten at the end so as to loosen the fibres, is made to serve as a brush in painting designs on their buckets, sounding boards, &c.
[4] *Vide* Appendix B, item 17.
[5] *Vide* Appendix B, item 19.
[6] *Vide post* "Games and Amusements," paragraph 35, and footnote.
[7] *Vide post* "Basket-work," paragraph 3, and Appendix B, item 21.
[8] *Vide* Appendix B, item 24.
[9] *Vide ante* "Habitations," paragraph 2.
[10] Viz., dugong, porpoise, paradoxurus, iguana, and pig.

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412 50. *tō·lma l'ôko tūg-* and *bī·jma l'ôko tūg-*.[1] Quartz and glass flakes and chips used for shaving, scarifying, and tattooing.[2]

51. *ā·ta-*.[3] *Cyrena* shell: great use is made of this, and of other varieties of this class, viz., as knives for cutting thatching leaves, for making the ornamental incisions on bows, paddles, &c., for planing, for sharpening the boar's tusk (item 47), for dressing and preparing arrows, for making the *ūj-* (item 76), for preparing the fibres obtained from the *Melochia velutina* (Andam., *al·aba-*), *Gnetum edule* (Andam., *pī·lita-*), and the *Anodendron paniculatum* (Andam., *yō·lba-*); they are also used as spoons in eating the gravy of pork, turtle, &c., and are in fact so constantly in demand that a supply is always kept and carried about ready for use.

52. *tā·lag-*.[4] Hone or whetstone, which when in use is held in the right hand and applied to the edge of the blade, which is generally held over the inner side of the left foot, the operator being seated on the ground; pointed weapons are sharpened on it in the usual way.

53. *nīp l'ār bū·l-*. Serrated bone at the root of the tail of the sting-ray; in former times their *tō·lbōd-* arrows (items 4 and 7) were headed with these bones, and it is believed that the early reports of the poisoned arrows of the Andamanese are entirely due to this circumstance; for, owing to their fragile spikes, these bones are apt to cause very serious flesh wounds.[5]

54. *gar·en-*. *Dentalium octogonum* used in the manufacture of various personal ornaments.

●314 55. *rīm-*. Resin obtained from a large tree (*Celtis* or *Gironniera*) of that name, which is used in making *kā·ngatā-būj-* (*vide* item 62).

237 56. *ā·ja-pīd-*. Wax of the white honeycomb: it is one of the ingredients in *kā·ngatā-būj-* (item 62), and is also used in the manufacture of the *chā·panga-* (item 22).

57. *tō·bul-pīd-* or *lē·re-*. Wax of the black honeycomb, made by a small description of bee in the hollows of trees: it is generally procured by men, and is applied to bowstrings, arrow fastenings, and the *kūd* (item 20) is used for caulking cracks in canoes and buckets.

[NOTE.—The honey is eaten, but is not so much relished as that from the white combs.]

[1] *Vide* Plate VIII, fig. 61.
[2] *Vide* Part III, "Stone Implements," paragraphs 3–6.
[3] *Vide* Plate VIII, fig. 63.
[4] *Vide* Plate VIII, fig. 56.
[5] "These wounds often cause great inflammation, whence a notion has been prevalent from ancient times that the sting is charged with venom, but of this there is no evidence. Other species of the sting-ray are plentiful in the warmer parts of the world, and they are everywhere dreaded. The spine is used by the savages of the South Sea Islands to point their spears" ("Chambers's Cyclop.").

10: Sen K-3, 4 (ca. 1955) 1962 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

The bombwn is the second most important type in the Class II type of woods. It has an averge weight of 40 lbs. per cubic ft. and is generally yellowish grey in colour with darker streaks. The durability of the wood is quite long but it cannot stand exposures. It is generally used for making of furniture and joineries. 137 313

The rest of the woods have also got an widespread application in a variety of purposes e.g. house building, shipmaking, carriage and furniture making. But the amount exploited from the forests is not of significance.

The didu and garjan are the most important in the class III type of woods. The former is of readdishy greay or yellowish in colour and is very soft and light. As such it is widely used in the making of packing cases for tea specially. The garjan is of the greatest demand of the Andaman forest woods. It has an average weight of 45-56 lbs. per cubic foot and is moderately hard. It is reddish grey to reddish brown in colour and is of moderate duration and as such the wood cannot be used for railway sleepers unless treated. It is used for planking and wood-paving now-a-days.

Ywegyi, being not a durable and hard type of wood, is generally used for the making of inferior cabinets. The trees yield a yellow dye which is also of wide use. [314]

Besides these, there are a host of other forest woods such as the several species of bamboo, cane, thatching palms etc. (For the industries based on forest products, see the Chapter on Industry.)

Forest Working.

The exploitation of timber from the forest has been attempted since the formation of the penal colony in the islands. For the systematic working of the forest, a Forest Department was opened in the year 1883 and a saw mill at Chatham was established in 1915 with a monthly outturn of 100 tons. But this was closed and another saw mill was set up by the Burma Trading Company having a monthly output of 750 tons and a second mill, an American circular mill in Chatham in 1927 and another mill in the North Andaman in 1925. But fortunately the wanton destruction of the forests was not possible because of the limited convict labour, and the fear of working in the aborigine-infested areas. The elephants were proved to be uneconomical in the exploitation of forest and an attempt for replacing the elephants by skidder was made in 1930. But the latter one was found to be uneconomical compared to the elephant power and this resulted again in the engagement of elephant 313 [492]

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1968 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

eyes to crack their skulls – and thrown into the small basket every woman carries on her back, hung from the usual cord round her forehead.

The fish the women catch are all the varicoloured species which always haunt the coral shallows, bright red, blue, green, black and white in a wonderful range of stripes and patterns. The Onges eat them with no respect for design, and I must confess that I myself found them very good.

Besides fish, the women catch molluscs, crustacea, lobsters, crayfish, crabs and even some species of hermit crabs (the latter are baked alive in their adopted shells, and only the abdomen is edible). Lobsters are plentiful, some striped with green and blue and weighing up to half a kilogram, with a very delicate flavour, but the Onges do not seem to be greatly interested in them. They prefer fish and crabs; *Pterocera*, again baked alive, are great favourites and I quite saw why the kitchen-middens are full of *Pterocera* shells.

The men prefer to fish with bows and arrows made specially for the purpose, and very different from those intended for game, the shaft being made of very light hollow cane, instead of the solid wood demanded by the mechanics of the game-arrow. The fishing arrow is made of three parts, bound tightly into one. The point, now made of iron,[1] is about four to five millimetres in diameter and twenty to twenty-five centimetres long. Like that of the arrow harpoon, it is fixed by a tightly bound thread to a small stick or foreshaft about fifteen to twenty centimetres long and slightly smaller in diameter than the shaft proper (usually eighty to eighty-five centimetres long), so that the overall length of the finished arrow is a hundred and ten centimetres or more. The binding threads are held fast by a mixture of resin and beeswax, coloured with ochre in the case of new arrows.

I tried giving the Onges hooks and lines; they were intrigued by my demonstration of how to leave lines overnight and draw them in next morning loaded with fish, but no more. This was not superstition or fear of the unknown but sheer adherence to established custom. They have neither incantations, amulets nor propitiating

[1] Formerly made of *Tridacna*, or very hard wood. Some of the latter are still to be found, but all the other types of head – fish quills, bone, and *Tridacna* – have disappeared long ago.

One danger is that as the wood dries
396 out small cracks will open up and let water through the end of the
[314] canoe; these the Onges stop with resin.

Then comes the decision which side of the trunk is to be the keel. Once this has been decided, the upper surface is chipped flat and the hollowing out of the centre section begins, leaving the flat platform at each end. The finished shell is often no more than three centimetres in thickness, increasing slightly under the end platforms to protect the ends of the canoe as they grate on the reefs.

The float and booms, which project considerably, are for obvious reasons attached after the canoe has been rolled to the water. The
[824] booms are made of heavy hard wood, but the float itself, made of *Hibiscus tiliacus* or *Sterculia villosa*, has to be not only light, so as to float, but soft, so that the fixing pegs can be driven in easily. These are set into the float in a series of triangles, held in securely by the expansion of the wet wood and the upward force of the sea. The free ends of the pegs are then lashed together in groups of three so that each triangular set becomes a pyramid. The outrigger booms are set parallel to each other; each runs right across the hull, firmly lashed into holes bored on each side of the canoe high in the gunwales, and extends at least three metres out on one side. The apex of each pyramid formed by the float pegs is lashed up to one of the booms, holding the float fast to the booms above it.

The canoes have no reinforcing ribs either inside or out, and because of their inherent fragility they are never left in the water; they are dragged up over specially cleared runways to the communal huts near the shore. There they are left lying in the sun among the Ipomeas.

[314] The direct heat dries them so rapidly that the wood invariably develops cracks, and the Onges resort patiently to their invariable remedy; resin is smeared over the cracks inside and out, and reinforced by a network of fibres laid on top, with a further layer of resin to seal them over.

[737] Once on shore the canoes are left lying till they are next wanted, but with everything ready; the invaluable *Nautilus* is ready to bale out, so too are the point, cord and shaft of the harpoon, the large flat stones on which fire is carried without damaging the craft, and the blocks of wood to knock the harpoons out of the turtle shells.